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LETTER DATED 23 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ROMANIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to draw your attention to the joint statement of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe Cooperation (SEEC) on Kosovo, issued following their meeting in Bucharest on 19 March 1999 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ion GORITA
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary

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Annex

Joint statement made in Bucharest on 19 March 1999 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe Cooperation

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe Cooperation (SEEC), Mr. Andrei Plesu, Mr. Ismail Cern, Mr. Aleksandar Dimitrov, Mrs. Nadezhda Mihaylova, Mr. Georgios Papandreou, met in Bucharest on 19 March 1999 at the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, who is currently hosting the South-Eastern European Cooperation and expressed their deep concern about the ongoing conflict in Kosovo that carries the risk of spillover effects, thus endangering peace and stability in our region. They considered the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the consequences that can be caused by the new waves of refugees into the neighbouring countries.

At this critical moment, the Ministers underlined the utmost importance of restraint on the part of both sides and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities. The latest build-up of troops in Kosovo by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has added to the gravity of the situation. Existing agreements in that regard should be fully respected.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the immediate peaceful settlement of the Kosovo crisis on the basis of substantial autonomy for Kosovo, in full respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They appealed to the parties concerned to ensure the fullest possible protection of the rights of all inhabitants, citizens, national minorities and ethnic communities, in accordance with the relevant international norms and principles.

The Ministers reiterated their full support to the efforts of the international community for the political settlement of the Kosovo crisis. They reconfirmed their commitment to contribute alongside the efforts of the Contact Group, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to a viable, peaceful solution as a prerequisite for peace and stability in Kosovo, as well as in the whole region in compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Emphasizing the fact that the Paris talks may represent a last opportunity for a political settlement of the crisis, they welcomed the signing of the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo, in its entirety, by the delegation of the Kosovar Albanians. They urged the rederal Republic of Yugoslavia also to sign the Agreement at the earliest stage. In that respect, the Ministers expressed support for an international force that would assist in the implementation of the Agreement.

The Ministers expressed their belief that the Agreement shall enable the different communities in Kosovo to promote inter-ethnic relations and coexistence that will withstand the test of time. The signing of the Rambouillet Agreement will pave the way for incorporating the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into European and international institutions.

They considered that this solution will free the neighbouring countries from the serious negative repercussions of the current instability in the region.

The Ministers expressed their readiness to further strengthen regional cooperation and solidarity, with a view to securing peace in Kosovo, averting future crises and fostering the European identity of the whole region.

The Ministers asked the Chairman-in-Office to work on setting up a Task Force on Kosovo, which will coordinate the efforts of the SEEC countries, particularly with regard to the humanitarian issues, and activate existing mechanisms within SEEC to that end.